

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
DOWNTOWN LIVABILITY  
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

May 21, 2014  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E-108

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ernie Simas, co-chair; Patrick Bannon, Mark D'Amato, Hal Ferris, Trudi Jackson, Loretta Lopez, Lee Maxwell, Erin Powell, Jan Stout

MEMBERS ABSENT: Aaron Laing co-chair; Michael Chaplin, Gary Guenther, Brad Helland, Ming Zhang

OTHERS PRESENT: Dan Stroh, Emil King, Patti Wilma, Department of Planning and Community Development

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER, APPROVAL OF AGENDA, APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 6:36 p.m. by Co-chair Simas.

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Ferris. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bannon and it carried unanimously.

With regard to the minutes, it was noted that Lee Maxwell was absent from the meeting and should be so noted.

Mr. Bannon called attention to the second sentence in the first paragraph on page 4 of the minutes and noted the last word "livability" should be "livable."

A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Mr. D'Amato. The motion was seconded by Ms. Stout and it carried unanimously.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Margot Blacker, 2011 100th Avenue NE, spoke on behalf of the Northtowne steering committee. She said she is totally opposed to increased height on the periphery of the Downtown, and opposed to all height and FAR increases, especially the 600-foot potential in the O-1 district. The Council principles document directs maintaining a graceful transition with adjoining neighborhoods. Changing 2-D and 2-C is not in keeping with that principle. Northtowne, Vuecrest and Surrey Downs, and possibly Pine Crest and West Bellevue, would see increased heights on the periphery as the start of World War III. The potential for a 300-foot tower half a block from the entrance to the Vuecrest community is not tenable. If necessary, the troops will be rallied and there will be a fight. In 1991 there was a major discussion regarding what the Downtown should be.

The argument was that the wedding cake had very high sides and that there needed to be a better transition to the neighborhoods. Most importantly, the conversation made it clear that Bellevue does not want to be a Manhattan or Seattle; rather it would prefer to be a Portland or a Vancouver, B.C. with a pedestrian-oriented downtown. Bellevue's downtown has been the cradle of neighborhoods and the height and FAR restrictions should not be changed. The promises made in 1981 and 1991 should be kept, namely that there would be neighborhood services in the Downtown and that the neighborhoods would be protected. The city should be creative with the bonus system, and other than the OLB the heights and FARs should be left alone, or modified only gently in the core with amenities that would benefit the neighborhoods.

Mr. Harpal Gill, 1770 Bellevue Way NE, said he is a resident of the Northtowne community and agreed with the statements made by Ms. Blacker. He said the Downtown is about 50 percent built out and with the current heights the Downtown and the neighborhoods are experiencing significant traffic impacts. He proposed that full build out under the current height and FAR restrictions will yield a doubling of the traffic and even greater backups on NE 4th Street, NE 8th Street, NE 10th Street and Bellevue Way, and the backups will flow back into the neighborhoods, triggering safety concerns and reduced mobility. Mobility is already a major concern. Any road widening will reduce mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists. Traffic delays will translate into abandoned trips and a loss of revenue for businesses in the Downtown.

Ms. Katherine Hughes, 10203 NE 31st Place, called attention to item 2b on page 3-9 of the packet which focused on the potential for additional height and density in the OLB district. Consideration is being given to allowing the maximum height of the district by a factor of four, and to expanding across the freeway to Wilburton. The result could be a wall barrier facing the freeway. It is not clear how mitigation on tower design and connectivity with Wilburton might be addressed.

Mr. Paul Brullier, 11021 NE 14th Street, said the minutes of the March meeting left out his statement that from where he lives he can see the layer cake of buildings developing up through the Ashwood district. On page 3-8 of the packet it says the Ashwood district is excluded from the higher building heights, but area 2a wraps around the Downtown and the higher building heights continue to the west of Ashwood. The layer cake approach, which so many fought hard to achieve in the 1990s, is slowly being eroded.

Mr. Tom Minty spoke representing the Seattle/King County Aging and Disabilities Advisory Board and Northwest Universal Design. He implored the Committee to consider the needs of Bellevue's aging population. Housing is intricately involved with healthcare. Currently, 17.6 percent of the gross domestic product is healthcare expenditures, and by 2050 the estimate is the number will rise to 34 percent. Thirteen percent of the population over the age of 65 represents 27 percent of all doctor visits, 38 percent of all hospital stays, and 45 percent of all hospital in-care days. The numbers dictate that simply scaling up the existing model will not work. There are 39.8 million people taking care of family members, typically for 20 hours per week on top of their full-time jobs; not surprisingly, 56 percent of the family caregivers are women. In all, the

collective contribution of services totals some \$450 billion but at a loss of about \$33 billion annually. Household size continues to steadily decrease, so the care model will be extended into the future. Jurisdictions need to think carefully about innovative ways of incorporating their aging populations back into society. In the very near future, those over the age of 65 will outnumber those under the age of five. Aging in place needs to be the primary goal. Homes that adapt to change need to be the norm. A coordinated, comprehensive and collaborative relationship needs to exist between business and service providers.

Mr. Carl Vander Hoek, 342 102nd Avenue SE, addressed the issue of parking. He thanked the city for conducting another parking study. He noted that private parking lots are consistently referred to as being part of the supply available to the public. The study, however, acknowledges that privately owned, monitored and paid-for parking stalls are not available to patrons of businesses that do not own the parking. If one business pays for parking for its customers, another business should not be allowed to use the same parking for its customers. The survey of restaurant goers is highly suspect; the response rate was too low to be reliable. Retail customers should also have been surveyed. Of the restaurants surveyed, one has no parking at all and relies on on-street parking; another offers valet parking and a lot only half the size reported in the study; and still another shares a small parking lot with an office use upstairs, and its outdoor seating was not factored into the square footage reported by the study. Page 10 of the study has a paragraph with contradictory statements, one saying the majority of restaurant patrons park on the street, and another saying the majority of restaurant patrons park in private lots. The study does not plan for future growth. The study anticipates that by 2030 there will be five new projects built in Old Bellevue with a collective 296 private parking stalls. Those five new projects will cause the loss of nine on-street parking spaces, and the projects will be completed by 2017, after which no additional development is anticipated under the study through 2030. The maps on pages 14-20 of the study indicate that 68 cars can park in a 59-stall garage. Page 22 refers to the former hotel site as having 4500 square feet of office and 3200 square feet of restaurant, but will provide only 25 parking stalls in a space large enough for 12 parking stalls.

Mr. Stu Vander Hoek, 9 103rd Avenue NE, said parking can be a very complex issue but is also the life of most businesses. The easy solution is to build a structured parking garage for users of Old Bellevue. There are additional solutions that will provide some relief, and they should be researched appropriately. The recent study was not done appropriately in that it includes private parking in the public supply. The assumptions are fundamentally flawed. Private parking is owned, operated and used by the owners, tenants and customers of the businesses in the building having the parking. Sixty percent of the total stalls in Old Bellevue are private. The study implies use of the private supply as part of the solution, yet it is not available and cannot be part of the solution. The study does not provide a real basis for any near- or long-term solutions to the current or future problems associated with a shortfall in the amount of parking needed. The study continues to press the city's view that the preferred mode of transportation for customers can be dictated by a policy that limits the supply of parking. The city believes the market demand can be changed by reducing the availability of parking without factoring in

impacts to the success of the district. The study was undertaken without practical knowledge and input about actual parking utilization by residents, business owners, customers and employees. The study should be tossed. The Council should be told that a well-thought-out and inclusive study is needed that does not rely on an unrealistic private parking supply to fix the problem. The simple solution is to build a public parking garage sooner rather than later; it should be given priority.

Ms. Kristina Wisth, 37 103rd Avenue NE, spoke representing the Old Bellevue Merchants Association. She agreed that a parking garage is the solution Old Bellevue needs. The most logical location for it is underground in Downtown Park or Wildwood Park. Completion of the circle in Downtown Park should include an aesthetically pleasing parking structure. In the 20 years Gilberts on Main has been open, there have been no public works projects in Old Bellevue. A public parking structure will alleviate a host of issues and problems and would open the community to music festivals, street fairs, farmers markets, political rallies, and any number of other activities. The library has a beautiful parking structure; something similar is needed in Old Bellevue.

Ms. Brittany Barker, 10112 NE 10th Street, said the Fortin Group is a multigenerational family owned real estate asset management company that owns about ten acres in the Northwest Village area of the Downtown to the north of Bellevue Square. The properties include the Bellevue Village Shopping Center, Bellevue Village North Office Building, and La Chateau Apartments. She said she is the fourth generation of her family to be committed to the continued smart growth and economic success of Downtown Bellevue. She said she is a resident of the Downtown, a community volunteer for Kids Quest Children's Museum, an active member of Bellevue Rotary, and serves on the boards of the Overlake Hospital Foundation, Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, and Eastside Heritage Center. The Fortin Group has been actively involved in the livability study and has assembled a team of urban planning, feasibility and transportation experts to help explore the range of options that are possible under the current zoning and what may be offered in the future should the zoning be updated. As a legacy owner, Horton Group supports the type of forward-thinking planning the Committee is studying that emphasizes connectivity, walkability, open space and civic vitality in ways that will enhance the quality of life and quality of experience for users of the Downtown. She said in a few moments Matt Roewe with Via Architecture would share with the Committee some ideas that may be feasible in Bellevue if some of the ideas that have been considered come to fruition.

Mr. Matt Roewe with Via Architecture and Planning in Seattle praised the Committee and the city planners for their efforts to revisit the Downtown development codes. He noted that a letter containing principles and suggested priorities had been submitted to the Committee. He said he appreciates the fact that the city is drawing inspiration from Vancouver, B.C. which is regarded by many as one of the most livable urban environments in North America. Via Architecture led the planning effort for Southeast Falls Creek and the Olympic Village which 30 years later continues to be very successful. Fundamental to the success of livable urban placemaking is getting the ground plane correct. Things like pedestrian crossings and contributions to open space are very

expensive to provide, and where land is at a premium it forces parking to go underground. The amenity bonus programs are needed in order to make those kinds of things happen. Any discussion about height would be incomplete without talking about how to manage bulk and scale. Where there are multiple towers on a single site all subscribing to the same development standards, the result is a mesa effect. As an alternative there should be some variety in height offered under the right circumstances, up to 20 percent, to create a more interesting and iconic skyline. It can be done with tower spacing and staggering requirements relative to floor plate size and type of use, and view, shadow impacts and the creation of sunlit public spaces can be considered through the design review process. For the larger sites in the Downtown, consideration should be given to offering more of a discretionary process like the one used in Vancouver, B.C. Half of the Downtown is developed so what comes next will be infill. The layer cake approach will still be in effect and the end result may not be as uniform as some would think.

Ms. Mary Ellen Hundley with Ballet Bellevue, 204 100th Avenue NE, thanked the Committee for making time available for the public to speak on subjects that involve the community. She urged the Committee to include the arts in everything dealing with livability in Bellevue. Deb Twersky with 4Culture has proposed making a larger effort to include the arts in all levels of planning. For many years Bellevue was home to the Bellevue Philharmonic Orchestra and the organization was regularly included in real estate advertisements touting the livability of the city, but that organization has ceased to exist. The Bellevue Civic Theatre is also gone, as is the Bellevue Repertory Theatre, and the effort to do a Bellevue opera has failed. Ballet Bellevue, as small as it is, is the only professional performing arts institution left in the city. For the season starting September 1, Ballet Bellevue will be expanding its mission to become the Bellevue Opera Ballet and Orchestra. Hopefully as the years go by the organization will grow. Support is needed because the building in which Ballet Bellevue currently is housed will be demolished in the spring by the city in order to put in 62 new parking stalls. The organization is seeking a new home and hopes to stay in Downtown Bellevue.

Ms. Sherry Druckman, 9635 SE Shoreland Drive, said she and her husband have lived on Meydenbauer Bay/Old Bellevue for 15 years. She said they are both involved in the Bellevue Downtown Association as well as the Chamber of Commerce. She advocated in favor of increasing the height limit in the Downtown. The amount of job growth and intellectual capital that is drawn to the city makes it necessary to concentrate on providing growth to meet the demand. Taller buildings will allow Bellevue to progress and grow while providing the much-needed public benefit of open spaces, public parks, affordable housing, and public art. There needs to be a balance of housing that will not generate excess traffic provided there are walkable connections to entertainment, employment and shopping. Increasing height limits will allow for providing an innovative and attractive skyline, which in turn will create interest and attract talent to the city.

Mr. Joseph Brazen said he owns a building on Main Street and operates two businesses, a real estate firm and the 520 Bar and Grill restaurant. He said he has been associated with

Main Street in Old Bellevue for 18 years and has witnessed much change; where there used to be a few clothing and bike shops, it is now restaurant row, something no one really saw coming. Given that direction, however, the city needs to plan accordingly as more restaurants will come. He said the parking lot for his restaurant will often be only half full when the restaurant is completely full. Overall, though, there is a parking problem in Old Bellevue that everyone needs to work on together to solve. A parking structure would be a good idea, especially combined with valet services and the like. Putting meters on the street might work well; that would certainly be a better idea than ticketing cars if they visit the street more than once per day. The city is allowing a large new building on 102nd Avenue NE that will be taking away some parking during the construction. Old Bellevue is really new Bellevue and good planning is needed that will take that notion into account, especially in planning for more parking.

Ms. Susan Gibson, 9905 Belfair Lane, said she is a professor and instructor at the University Of Washington School Of Business. She said she teaches courses in organizational behavior in business, government and society. The classes focus on social responsibility and ethics as well as human behavior. She said she has lived in her residence directly across from the outer layer of the Downtown wedding cake for 38 years and has enjoyed birds, rabbits, open vistas, and an enjoyable community. If more high-rise structures are allowed in the Downtown, the value of homes in adjacent communities will be devalued. Safety and security will be compromised by having many eyes looking down from above into backyards. Bellevue is a diverse city, but in considering what diversity and livability means thought must be given to the needs of homeowners who treasure their homes and their community. The Committee is implored to consider the livability needs of those who have lived in the community for many years.

Mr. Anthony Padonas, 2633 Evergreen Point Road, said he is one of the owners of a retail space on Main Street. He said as a landlord he is being held hostage to the issue of land use. On page 6 of the Old Bellevue parking study differentiates between existing buildings and new buildings without clarifying what the difference is. He said his building was constructed in 2009 and has one vacant space. A small restaurant use wants to locate there but the city's land use department is holding that up based on their definition of an existing building.

### **3. REVIEW EVALUATION OF DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES STRATEGIES FROM CAC'S JANUARY 15 ALTERNATIVES WORKSHOP**

By way of introduction, Strategic Planning Manager Emil King said the meeting focus was the design guidelines and recommendations relative to Downtown parking. He also asked the Committee to indicate which alternatives relative to building height and form should be taken to the public event on June 3. The assumption is that the final Committee meeting will be June 18.

Mr. King said the final meeting of the Committee will not represent the end of the public process. Once the recommendation is forwarded to the City Council, the Planning

Commission will be directed to take up many of the issues for study and a recommendation with regard to the legislation action the Council should take.

Mr. Ferris said he was all for wrapping up the work of the Committee by the end of June but pointed out the Committee has yet to see any analysis about the incentives and how the points will be weighted. If that is something the Committee is not going to be addressing, wrapping up by the end of June is possible, but if the Committee is supposed to have that conversation, the work of the Committee will need to continue beyond June. Co-chair Simas said it was his understanding that task will be left to the Planning Commission. The issues of height, form and design are very familiar to the Planning Commission and that group is better equipped to deal with the nuances. The Committee has taken on the bigger picture, and the Planning Commission will be asked to address the details.

Planning Director Dan Stroh said the Committee's discussions regarding the incentive system will be passed on in detail to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Bannon asked if the Committee will have the opportunity to finalize what it will hand off to the Planning Commission at the June meeting. Co-chair Simas said the June meeting will be focused on making the final recommendations item by item. The hope is that at the June meeting the staff will have ready for the Committee's review a substantially complete plan to review and comment on.

Ms. Maxwell urged the Committee in wrapping up its work to focus specifically on every item and to carefully consider whether or not it contributes to livability, both for those who live near the Downtown and those who live and/or work in the Downtown. She commented that to a large degree livability has become an afterthought to the notion of updating the building plan for the Downtown. Updating the building plan is a good idea, but the focus of the Committee from the outset was supposed to be on livability.

Co-chair Simas concurred. He stressed that the Committee needs to stay focused on the big picture and should leave to the Planning Commission and others the minute details.

Mr. King called attention to page 2-1 of the packet and the Committee's design guidelines recommendations. He said staff would walk through each topic and answer questions, in advance of the Committee reaching a conclusion about recommending, recommending with modifications, or not recommending each item.

Community Development Manager Patti Wilma said the design guidelines proposal was divided into three parts: format, content and procedures. She said the intent relative to the format is to provide a clear and concise objective; to explain with details and graphics what the guideline is; and to provide examples to help tell the story visually. The content section will include revisions to the building/sidewalk design guidelines to show where the highest levels of pedestrian activity are to be concentrated and to clarify the expectations about frontage treatments; a clear master plan for where the through-block connections would be appropriate and design options; building and public realm

materials emphasizing the use of high-quality materials that enhance the street environment while maintaining compatibility; direction for façade treatments relative to massing and articulation, with a strong emphasis on ground-level differentiation that creates a quality and inviting public realm with a human scale; rooftop design that integrates mechanical screening and allows for recreation space; an emphasis on preserving views from public spaces; an emphasis on opportunities to reinforce the character and distinctiveness of Downtown neighborhoods; a focus on ensuring good transitions between the Downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods; and other issues relating to walkability, environmental sustainability, and physical design to promote safety and prevent crime. The procedure section will include a focus on maintaining the current administrative design review process while allowing for greater flexibility for departures from the guidelines to entertain and accommodate things that have not been thought of.

Mr. Ferris stressed that all through-block connections need to be clearly visible and feel like they are open to the public. They should not be designed to feel like one is walking into someone's private space. With regard to building materials, he suggested there should be less specificity with regard to what materials cannot be used and more of an emphasis on end results.

Mr. D'Amato also stressed the need for well-designed canopies, not canopies with breaks in the middle and a drip line directly above the sidewalk.

Mr. Ferris said the issue of preserving views can be controversial. To interpret a requirement to preserve views absent a definition of what views are to be protected could result in nothing being allowed any taller than what currently exists. Ms. Wilma said space between towers is one way to preserve views of areas outside the city, including the Cascades, the Olympics and the lakes. In that instance the views relate to natural features. Such views from public spaces are few and far between in Bellevue. Mr. Ferris said because that is true the focus may need to be more on light and air.

Mr. D'Amato said the preservation of light and air is just as important as views of natural features.

Ms. Maxwell concurred and suggested the views to be protected need to extend beyond just from public spaces to include from the adjacent neighborhoods.

Ms. Powell said natural features such as trees are valued as views by many.

Mr. Bannon said he had also struggled with the concept of preserving views and which views are in need of protection. Within the context of the code, however, it is certainly appropriate to consider views from the public realm. To move beyond that sphere could be to move into an ever-increasing web of complexity.

Ms. Jackson commented that allowing top stories to be enclosed as penthouses if they are to be used for recreational purposes for the building tenants is tantamount to adding



another story or so. She noted that the issue arose in a focus group but had not been a big topic of discussion by the Committee. Recreational facilities that are for the use of tenants only are not really an asset for the city proposed not recommending that option. Mr. Ferris concurred.

Mr. D'Amato said the alternative is wasted rooftop space with little more than a screen around mechanical equipment. Allowing recreational uses on rooftops makes them far more attractive, particularly for those who look down on them. Enclosing the space does not push the overall building height up.

With regard to allowing for departure from the guidelines, Mr. D'Amato noted that the Committee had discussed having an alternative review process. He said it was his recollection that the Committee was in favor of an alternative review process that would be less prescriptive. Ms. Wilma said staff have discussed the issue and are working to craft what should be proposed. Mr. D'Amato said he did not want to see Pandora's Box opened but wants an approach that will be predictable and fair, as well as fairly fast.

Mr. Bannon stressed the need for the alternative review process to be no less rigorous in making sure proposed development plans match with the Downtown Subarea Plan and with the intent of the design guidelines. The alternative review process should not be a way for developers to get around the established guidelines. Ms. Wilma agreed it should provide an alternative route that ultimately arrives at the same place.

Ms. Maxwell said she would like the alternative review process involve input from the Downtown residential group and the Bellevue Downtown Association.

Mr. Stroh said the staff have given the issue a lot of thought and has kept in mind the desire of the Committee to allow for creativity and flexibility. The discussions had by the Committee have included all manner of panels and outside groups along the lines of the way other cities operate. At the same time, there has been recognition of the fact that there is much to be said for the predictability and professionalism of the approach already in place in Bellevue. The Committee has been clear about wanting opportunities to allow for creativity in departing from the guidelines while wanting to also retain the review process that has worked so well over the years.

Ms. Wilma asked for comment on the design guidelines worksheet.

Mr. Bannon suggested that there is opportunity to clarify the expectations relative to building frontages and sidewalk relationships. He cautioned against predetermining outcomes. The associated chart in the packet materials is quite detailed regarding pedestrian-oriented frontage and number of driveways, which are issues the Committee did not specifically delve into. Ms. Wilma said the current building/sidewalk guidelines state categorically what street frontages should have all, 50%, or merely some retail. The chart outlines a departure option. Co-chair Simas explained that in putting together the materials the staff discussed whether or not numbers should be used as examples or if things should be left vaguer. In some places examples are given, in other places existing

code language is used, and still other places the intent has been to stay away from specific numbers. Ultimately the numbers or lack of them will be re-digested by the Planning Commission.

Ms. Maxwell asked if the “other issues” category would be the right place to include things like a heritage focus, wayfinding, and an iconic image statement about the community, all of which hinge on livability.

Mr. Ferris reminded the Committee that the process kicked off with a review of the Land Use Code audits. The conclusion reached was that Downtown livability is not being achieved through the current code and guidelines. He suggested that at the last meeting the audits should be held up alongside the specific changes being recommended as a sort of report card.

Ms. Stout pointed out that the word “livability” has been used in a variety of contexts throughout the process without any agreement as to exactly what it means. She suggested that some definition of the word should be created. Co-chair Simas said to some degree the answer will lay within the body of the Committee’s work. Ultimately, the final document should envision the overall view of the Committee relative to what livability is. Ms. Stout said she lives 200 feet from the edge of the Downtown, is over 65, and has a disability. She suggested that her description of what is livable would be far different from another member of the Committee who is much younger and has different needs. Co-chair Simas said hopefully the needs of each Committee member will be addressed in the final product.

Ms. Powell suggested injecting in some of the ideas the concept of ADA accessibility. She allowed that the city is bound by law to assure accessibility, but suggested livability as a concept should shroud every element of the Committee’s findings.

Mr. Stroh reminded the Committee that the discussion has in some respects gone far beyond what is required by ADA to include things like universal design. He said staff would go back through the document ahead of the next meeting and identify the ways the Committee has used the term “livability.” The Land Use Code audits were intended to compare how well the city is doing against the principles outlined by the Council. He agreed there should be a final report card showing how each item has been addressed.

Ms. Jackson said it was previously pointed out that there is a certain fortress-like aspect to the Bravern. She asked if the design guidelines as proposed would have kept that from happening, or if something more needs to be changed. Mr. Stroh avoided critiquing the design of a particular building but said the Committee has extended the definition of the pedestrian corridor to the east; had that already been in place, the frontage of the Bravern would have been encompassed. Additionally, the street frontage requirements associated with 110th Avenue NE would also have affected the Bravern’s frontage. The design guidelines dealing with articulation and modulation would have impacted the design of the towers, and any requirement for variation in building height would have had to be taken into account.

There was unanimous support for moving forward to the Council the design guidelines format considerations; the design guidelines content considerations as discussed and without a blessing for the chart; and the design guidelines procedures considerations.

Mr. Bannon said he would like at a later time an evaluation of how the departure concept could apply beyond just the design guidelines to possibly include flexibility in the amenity incentive system.

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#### 4. REVIEW EVALUATION OF BUILDING HEIGHT AND FORM ALTERNATIVES FROM CAC'S JANUARY 15 ALTERNATIVES WORKSHOP

Mr. King said staff was seeking direction on taking the building height and form alternatives to the June 3 public meeting. He allowed that height and density are complex topics. He said there are key differences between giving developers the ability to increase height on a particular site and adding both height and density to a site. He said that public input will be vital to the Committee's final conclusions.

Mr. Ferris pointed out that the Planning Commission holds public hearings often and sometimes issues are advanced for purposes of the public hearing in order to hear the public's opinion, not because the Commission is in agreement with the issue. He suggested that it might be worthwhile going to the June 3 open house with the widest possible range of ideas to hear what the public has to say.

Mr. King noted that the Downtown height limits have not been significantly examined for changed for the last 20 years. The perimeter design districts were put in place in 1991, but most of the other provisions date back to 1981. There have been major zoning changes to urban centers, including the Overlake district in Redmond, the Totem Lake area in Kirkland, and South Lake Union. There have been some local changes as well, including in the Bel-Red subarea where heights up to 150 feet and FARs up to 4.0 are allowed in the transit nodes, which is higher than what is allowed for office in the Downtown-MU district, and higher building height and increased FAR has been recommended for the Eastgate/I-90 corridor.

Mr. King suggested that if building height and density increases are recommended, it should be to achieve a better urban design outcome than the status quo by adding to the architectural excellence, character, and memorability of the Downtown; to continue distinguishing the special market niche played by the Downtown; and to help deliver additional amenities that enhance the livability and character of the Downtown. Any impacts that may result from the additional height and density will need to be addressed, and it will be necessary to continue providing for appropriate transitions between the Downtown and the adjoining residential neighborhoods while promoting better and more complementary linkages.

The Committee was introduced to a 3-D model that was built in Revit and input into Google Earth for context. Mr. King noted that the model incorporates buildings that are under construction or in the pipeline, and includes development scenarios of sites likely to develop over the next few decades. He said the model does not incorporate the design guideline details for views, light and air, or through-block connections. The model was developed in order to portray visually what the Committee is considering relative to height and bulk.

The Committee was first shown the model results for the status quo for the O-1 and O-2 districts. Buildings shown in green were those on sites likely to develop, while those shown in tan were those under construction or in the pipeline. The status quo for the O-1 district allows buildings up to 450 feet in height; currently there are three buildings at that height and more are planned. The O-2 district has a maximum height limit of 250 feet and there are a number of buildings at that height.

The next model shot showed what the districts might look like if the height limit were increased to 600 feet in the O-1 district and 400 feet in the O-2 district. The staff believes the max height of 600 will not be achievable for office because the maximum FAR will be reached first. A very large site could, by moving some FAR around, achieve the full height in one tower, but that would mean the rest of the development on the site would be much lower. Given that residential has no FAR limit in O-1, the full height limit could easily be achieved. It is likely there would be more variability in tower heights, and potentially developers might choose to incorporate smaller floorplates in order to go higher. That in turn would provide more open space on the ground and more light and air.

The Committee was then shown modeling depicting what the O-1 and O-2 districts might look like if built out with both additional height and 20 percent more FAR. It was noted that many of the urban design outcomes would mirror those achieved by allowing increased height alone, though the increased FAR would allow more towers to reach the full height allowed. Increasing the allowed FAR would not affect residential projects in O-1 given they not have limits on FAR, but it would give a boost to the bonus amenity incentive system since the increases would need to be earned.

Ms. Powell asked what the likelihood is of the tallest buildings being strictly office or strictly residential buildings, or if the buildings will likely have a mix of both. Mr. Ferris explained that when office and residential are included in the same tower, separate vertical circulation is required for each use; it is not a good idea to have the office tenants using the same elevators as the residential tenants. Hotels with residential on the upper floors is not uncommon; residential over office is very uncommon; and office over residential just never happens.

Mr. Ferris said in the studies he has been involved in that involve height and FAR the list of underlying concerns has included light and air reaching the street level. Usually floor plates are prescriptively limited to prevent the amassing of properties together to achieve big footprints by maximizing the FAR in one building. It is not uncommon for

jurisdictions to limit floor plates above a certain height to something like 12,000 square feet regardless of the use, and the restriction is imposed due to concerns about light and air coming down to the street level. With such restrictions, however, comes the issue of how many towers and how close they can be together. The towers in Vancouver, B.C. are spread out and that is a large part of their beauty, but unless that approach is prescribed, that will not be the result. The model runs do not show towers spread out around the Downtown. It all comes down to what the aspiration is: maximizing land value, or creating a more livable community. Before entertaining additional height and FAR, the Committee should have more of an understanding of what floor plate limitations will be included and what spacing there will be between towers.

Ms. Maxwell said tower spacing could be achieved by placing a limit on the number of towers per Downtown neighborhood.

Mr. D'Amato asked if a property owner of a site in the O-1 or O-2 districts could achieve anything approaching a 20 percent FAR increase under the current land use regulations through the application of amenities. Ms. Wilma allowed that they could not. Mr. D'Amato said the Committee's discussion has centered on the fact that allowing more height and FAR would not necessarily increase density in the Downtown but would result in increased building variability. He asked if allowing increased FAR would trigger the need for an Environmental Impact Statement, and that could be the Achilles heel for some of the proposals. Mr. Stroh explained that land use forecasts are done in light of the share of the regional growth a given area is likely to attract. The FAR that can be accomplished on a given site or even for the area does not affect the regional share of growth. A 20 percent increase in FAR would increase the overall build-out over many decades, but it would not affect the land use forecast of how much growth will occur by 2030. Some modeling is under way of what the local impacts on the transportation system would be and hopefully there will be information to share at the next meeting.

Mr. King called attention next to the modeling of the MU district. He noted that the district currently has a maximum height limit of 200 feet and a maximum FAR of 5.0 for residential and 100 feet and a maximum FAR of 3.0 for nonresidential. There are several buildings constructed to the limits in the district, and the district includes several developments of five-over-one construction. More residential towers at the 200-foot level are anticipated in the district in the future, as well as more five-over-one construction.

The first model showed 300 feet as the building height for residential and 200 feet as the height for office. Mr. King said in the estimation of staff the maximum height would be reached by a number of towers, though most likely by residential towers. It would be more problematic for an office tower to reach 300 feet without the benefit of additional FAR. The additional height likely would allow for smaller podiums and floor plates.

The second model factored in 20 percent more FAR to the increased heights allowed for residential, and for nonresidential another 2.0 FAR was added. With those changes more towers would likely be constructed to the 300-foot level for residential, and to the 200-foot level for office buildings.

Turning to the OLB district, Mr. King explained that the current height limit is 75 feet for nonresidential and 90 feet for residential buildings, and said both have an FAR of 3.00. Only one significant new development has occurred during the last development cycle and it was built to just below the full FAR and height limit. For the area of the district between NE 4th Street and NE 8th Street, the direction given was to examine building height up to 350 feet and a doubling of the FAR. Additional height alone while retaining the current FAR will do little to change the development potential of the area.

Staff believes with a height limit of 350 feet and an FAR of 6.0 development in the area would be very likely. The proximity to the freeway and transit services will lend itself to office development and hospitality uses, and possibly to some residential. The height and FAR could lead to ground level access amenities, though because the land drops off from 112th Avenue NE the area could be right for bigger floor plates. To the south of NE 4th Street height would drop to 300 feet and an FAR of 5.0.

Ms. Maxwell asked what the difference is in the allowed uses between the MU and OLB zones. Ms. Wilma said there is not much of a difference. Ms. Maxwell said she favored extending the MU to the area between Main Street and NE 4th Street east to the freeway as a way of making a truer wedding cake from the standpoint of the area to the south of Main Street. The perimeter design district for that area should also be extended, yielding a lower tier along Main Street. Mr. King said an FAR of 6.0 for residential and 5.0 for nonresidential for the MU district in effect does extend the MU district in that direction. He said staff would be willing to include another interim scenario for that area.

Ms. Jackson voiced concern about taking an approach that might result in the construction of a wall along I-405 without permeability to the Downtown. In terms of scale, as Wilburton redevelops there will need to be some continuity, with the concept of the tier extending across the freeway.

Mr. King said in the northwest corner of the Downtown, the deep B design district extends an additional 600 to 900 feet beyond the typical B district boundary. The district was established in 1991. The current maximum height for residential is 90 feet, and the maximum FAR is 5.0. The assumption is that under the current restrictions a number of residential developments would come online, along with a few office developments, and that the buildings would have fairly large mass. The additional height considered for the area was 200 feet with the same 5.0 FAR, which the staff believes will result in towers with smaller podiums and floorplates. The likelihood is that the area will develop with a combination of towers and lower residential development. However, adding to the 300 feet of height an additional 20 percent FAR probably would result in the full height being achieved by several but not all towers. An FAR of 3.0 would clearly be reachable on the larger sites and on some of the smaller sites depending on floorplate configuration.

Ms. Stout pointed out that the area is currently home to a number of businesses that serve the local neighborhood. The development that will result from allowing additional height

and FAR will absolutely ruin the transition to the residential area to the north as well to the Vuecrest neighborhood, and there will be pushback from those neighborhoods.

Mr. Ferris agreed that the proposed height and FAR increase would not be a good idea for the area. However, the Committee did discuss the option at the workshop, which is why the staff took the time to do the modeling work.

Mr. King said the two groups at the workshop provided different directions for the remainder of the A and B perimeter design districts. One group felt the district restrictions should be retained as they are, while the other group took the opposite view. Currently, for the first 150 feet in from the edge building height is limited to 55 feet for residential, and the maximum FAR is 3.5, which for many sites is achievable. The area sees a lot of four-over-one residential construction. The B design district has a height limit of 90 feet and a maximum FAR of 5.0 for residential. Under the status quo projects can reach the maximums. If height in the A district were increased to 70 feet and in the B district to 125, projects will take advantage of the additional height. Projects that would have a hard time using their allowed FAR of 3.5 in 55 feet would have a much easier time at 70 feet. In the B districts projects would also take advantage of the additional height.

Mr. King turned next to the notion of equalizing the allowable height and FAR for residential and nonresidential, primarily in the MU district. Currently residential is allowed 200 feet of height and an FAR of 5.0, whereas nonresidential is allowed 100 feet of height and an FAR of 3.0. A schematic was shown to the Committee depicting what development on a typical superblock could look like with residential and nonresidential operating under the same restrictions. It was noted that the office floorplates likely would be larger than those for residential.

Ms. Jackson asked what the benefit would be for the city if the office and residential restrictions were equalized. Mr. Stroh said tax base aside, the concern has been that because office must in effect pay more for land by virtue of the fact that the use cannot achieve as much square footage as residential, office might ultimately not be able to compete. The plan for the Downtown is to continue serving as a regional employment center. The status quo could yield a mix of office and residential that simply does not work. Vancouver, B.C. is facing the same issue. The city is very livable but is struggling to maintain its regional role as an employment center.

Mr. D'Amato said what is missing is the ability to vary building heights. He suggested identifying an approach that would keep the height and bulk from being spread around evenly, possibly a ratio of one site to another. From a livability standpoint, having all buildings the same height in a district is undesirable.

Mr. Ferris pointed out that for a long time only office was built in the Downtown. Residential has made inroads only relatively recently. In terms of overall square footage, things are still tilted heavily toward office. It has been 30 years since the current provisions were put in place, and the intent is to review the requirements more frequently

in the future. If at some point in the future the city finds it is not attracting the businesses it desires in order to stay competitive, adjustments can be made.

There was consensus to move items 1a and 1b forward to the open house for additional input.

With regard to item 2a, Ms. Jackson voiced concern over allowing a 67 percent increase in the FAR for nonresidential in the MU district. She said her fear was the result would be more big developments.

Co-chair Simas said he was hoping to hear from the public input about allowing taller and thinner buildings that will allow more air and light to reach the ground. The feedback solicited needs to have some target to it.

Mr. D'Amato said one approach might be to allow a certain FAR up to a certain height and then restrict it above that point. Mr. King said staff would bring to the open house some real world examples of what that might look like.

**Recording of the meeting was inadvertently stopped at 9:43 p.m. The following notes are from city staff.**

Option 2b – additional height and density in the OLB district: It was discussed that the raising the height to 350 feet and FAR to 6.0 made sense between NE 4th and NE 8th due to accessibility from the freeway and that the current OLB area between NE 4th and Main Street should reflect the decision made regarding MU on the west side of 112th.

The Committee agreed that an alternative should be modeled that extends the existing O2 and existing MU extended across 112th.

Discussion covered the possibility of extending the Perimeter Design District across 112th along Main Street. Staff pointed out this would be a down-zone compared with existing regulations. Per Committee consensus this was not recommended to be further modeled.

Option 2c – Raising the height and density in portions of the deep “B” design districts: The Committee was generally not in favor of raising the height 300 feet and FAR to 6.0 and was cautiously supportive about presenting an option of 200 feet for residential buildings only and maintaining the existing 5.0 FAR. Non-residential limits would not change in the deep “B”.

Concerns about impacts to Vuecrest such as view obstruction, shadow, and additional traffic were expressed.

2d Option - Additional height in the remainder of the “A” and “B” districts: Committee support was mixed. Protection of the adjacent neighborhoods is important while still encouraging affordable Downtown development.



3a Option – Equalizing residential and non-residential height and FAR: The Committee expressed support for this option but it needs additional study to avoid large, blocky office towers given the current office floorplate limit of 20,000 square feet compared to the residential limit of 12,000 square feet above 80 feet.

5. REVIEW EVALUATION OF DOWNTOWN PARKING STRATEGIES FROM CAC'S JANUARY 15 ALTERNATIVES WORKSHOP

Discussion of Downtown parking was deferred to occur at June 18 Advisory Committee meeting, which will take into consideration public comment from the June 4 open house and focus groups.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Dennis True, 10203 Main Street, said parking in Old Bellevue has been a problem for a long time. A parking garage is needed to serve visitors as well as employees.

Ms. Brittany Barker, 10112 NE 10 Street, said her family founded QFC and the Downtown Bellevue location is the flagship store. Neighborhood services will not be diminished with approved additional height.

Mr. Carl Vander Hoek, 342 102nd Avenue SE, said 32 businesses in Old Bellevue do not provide parking. There are 30,000 square feet of restaurant missing 200 parking stalls due to the Land Use Code language that exempts the first 1,500 square feet of restaurant from providing parking.

Mr. Wade Moller, Cantinetta and Mercato Stellina restaurants in Old Bellevue (address not provided). Issuance of a building permit for a new restaurant on Main Street, El Correo, has been suspended due to lack of parking and a change in the interpretation of language regarding exemption of the first 1,500 square feet of restaurant in an existing building/space. This is a fairness issue when building A must provide parking but building B does not. A net increase in parking stalls is needed, not just a reallocation of what already exists in Old Bellevue.